IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1-22:

1. A method of detecting and/or quantifying an IgE antibody specific to a ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten in a liquid sample suspected to contain the IgE antibody comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting (i) the sample with (ii) a free dissolved ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten to form a mixture I comprising complexes that comprise the IgE antibody and the ligand (IgE-containing complexes),

(b) mixing the mixture I with a carrier to which is bound (iii) an IgE receptor, wherein said IgE receptor is CD23 (FcεRII) and/or FcεRI, to form a mixture II comprising carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes,

(c) separating the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes from the mixture II, and

(d) determining the amount of the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes formed by detecting a label present in the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes.

2. A method of detecting and/or quantifying an IgE antibody specific to a ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten in a liquid sample suspected to contain the IgE antibody comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting (i) the sample with (ii) a free dissolved labeled ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten to form a mixture I comprising complexes that comprise the IgE antibody and the ligand (IgE-containing complexes),

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(b) mixing the mixture I with a carrier to which is bound (iii) an IgE receptor, wherein said IgE receptor is CD23 (FcεRII) and/or FcεRI, to form a mixture II comprising carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes,

(c) separating the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes from the mixture II, and

(d) determining the amount of the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes formed by detecting the label present in the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes.

3. A method of detecting and/or quantifying an IgE antibody specific to a ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten in a liquid sample suspected to contain the IgE antibody comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting (i) the sample with (ii) a free dissolved ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten, wherein the ligand is bound to a label compound, to form a mixture I comprising complexes that comprise the IgE antibody and the ligand (IgE-containing complexes),

(b) mixing the mixture I with a carrier to which is bound (iii) an IgE receptor, wherein said IgE receptor is CD23 (FcεRII) and/or FcεRI, to form a mixture II comprising carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes,

(c) separating the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes from the mixture II, and

(d) determining the amount of the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes formed by detecting the label present in the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes.

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4. A method of detecting and/or quantifying an IgE antibody specific to a ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten in a liquid sample suspected to contain the IgE antibody comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting (i) the sample with (ii) a free dissolved ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten and with (iii) a label compound to form a mixture I comprising complexes that comprise the IgE antibody and the ligand (IgE-containing complexes),

(b) mixing the mixture I with a carrier to which is bound (iv) an IgE receptor, wherein said IgE receptor is CD23 (FcεRII) and/or FcεRI, to form a mixture II comprising carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes,

(c) separating the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes from the mixture II, and

(d) determining the amount of the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes formed by detecting the label present in the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes.

5. A method of detecting and/or quantifying an IgE antibody specific to a ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten in a liquid sample suspected to contain the IgE antibody comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting (i) the sample with (ii) a free dissolved ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten to form a mixture I comprising complexes that comprise the IgE antibody and the ligand (IgE-containing complexes),

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(b) mixing the mixture I with a carrier to which is bound (iii) an IgE receptor, wherein said IgE receptor is CD23 (FcεRII) and/or FcεRI, to form a mixture II comprising carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes,

(c) adding a label compound to the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes formed in step (b),

(d) separating the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes from the mixture II, and

(e) determining the amount of the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes formed by detecting the label present in the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes.

6. A method of detecting and/or quantifying an IgE antibody specific to a ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten in a liquid sample suspected to contain the IgE antibody comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting (i) the sample with (ii) a free dissolved ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten to form a mixture I comprising complexes that comprise the IgE antibody and the ligand (IgE-containing complexes),

(b) mixing the mixture I with a carrier to which is bound (iii) an IgE receptor, wherein said IgE receptor is CD23 (FcεRII) and/or FcεRI, to form a mixture II comprising carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes,

(c) separating the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes from the mixture II,

(d) adding a label compound to the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes resulting from the separation step (c) to form a mixture II', and

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(e) determining the amount of the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes formed by detecting the label present in the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes.

7. The method according to claim 6, wherein the labeled and carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes are separated from the mixture II' and washed prior to step (e).

8. The method according to any one of claims 3-7, wherein the label compound is a chemiluminescent compound covalently bound to avidin, streptavidin, or a functional derivative thereof and the ligand is bound to biotin or a functional derivative thereof.

9. The method according to claim 8, wherein the chemiluminescent compound is an acridinium compound.

10. The method according to claim 1, wherein the ligand is bound to biotin or a functional derivative thereof.

11. The method according to claim 1, wherein the IgE-containing sample is contacted with the ligand and allowed to incubate to form a mixture I (step (a)) before contacting mixture I with the carrier/IgE receptor (step (b)).

12. The method according to claim 1, wherein step (a) and (b) are carried out simultaneously in one operation.

13. The method according to claim 1, wherein the carrier is a particulate material.

14. The method according to claim 1, wherein the carrier is a paramagnetic particulate material.

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15. The method according to claim 1, wherein the IgE to be detected is quantified using both CD23 alone to obtain a first measurement and using FcεRI alone to obtain a second measurement.

16. The method according to claim 1, wherein the number of ligand molecules is between 100% and 200% of the number of IgE molecules to be detected.

17. A method of detecting and/or quantifying an IgE antibody specific to a ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten in a liquid sample suspected to contain the IgE antibody comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting (i) the sample with (ii) a free dissolved ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten, to form a mixture I comprising complexes that comprise the IgE antibody and the ligand (IgE-containing complexes),

(b) mixing the mixture I with a carrier to which is bound (iii) an IgE receptor, wherein said IgE receptor is CD23 (FcεRII) and/or FcεRI, to form a mixture II comprising carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes,

(c) separating the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes from the mixture II,

(d) adding a label compound coupled to an antibody to the IgE to be detected to the complexes present in steps (a), (b), or (c) above, and

(e) determining the amount of the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes formed by detecting the label present in the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes.

18. The method according to claim 17, wherein the label compound is coupled to the antibody via biotin.

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19. The method according to claim 17 or 18, wherein the label compound coupled to the antibody to the IgE to be detected is added to the carrier-bound complexes separated in step (c).

20. A method of detecting and/or quantifying a specific IgE antibody in a liquid sample suspected to contain the IgE antibody comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting (i) the sample with (ii) a free ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten to form a mixture I comprising complexes that comprise the IgE antibody and the ligand (IgE-containing complexes), wherein the ligand is bound to biotin or a functional derivative thereof,

(b) mixing the mixture I with a carrier to which is bound (iii) an IgE receptor, wherein said IgE receptor is CD23 (FcεRII) and/or FcεRI, to form a mixture II comprising carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes,

(b') separating the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes from the mixture II and washing said complexes,

(b") adding to the washed carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes a solution of (iv) a chemiluminescent compound covalently bound to avidin, streptavidin, or a functional derivative thereof to form a mixture II',

(c) separating the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes from the mixture II' and washing the complexes, and

(d) initiating a chemiluminescent reaction in the resulting IgE-containing complexes and detecting/measuring the resulting chemiluminescence, if any.

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21. A method of monitoring and evaluating the immunological status of a subject comprising the steps of:

(a) obtaining a liquid sample suspected to contain an IgE antibody from the subject,

(b) contacting (i) the sample with (ii) a free ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten to form a mixture I comprising complexes that comprise the IgE antibody and the ligand (IgE-containing complexes),

(c) mixing the mixture I with a carrier to which is bound (iii) an IgE receptor, wherein said IgE receptor is CD23 (FcεRII) and/or FcεRI, to form a mixture II comprising carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes,

(d) separating the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes from the mixture II, and

(e) determining the amount of the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes formed by detecting a label present in the carrier-bound IgE-containing complexes.

22. A method of monitoring and evaluating the immunological status of a subject receiving Specific Allergy Vaccination (SAV) treatment comprising the steps of:

(a) obtaining a liquid sample suspected to contain an IgE antibody from the subject,

(b) contacting (i) the sample with (ii) a free ligand in the form of an antigen, an antibody, or a hapten to form a mixture I comprising complexes that comprise the IgE antibody and the ligand (IgE-containing complexes),

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